

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **8-A**

USA TODAY
8 January 1986

OPINION

PATRICK J. LEAHY

Guest columnist

Good rule: Talk softly and carry a big stick

NEWPORT, Vt. — Libya's Khadafy gains top "honors" as one of the leading supporters of international terrorism.

He touts his "victories" over unarmed civilians on commercial aircraft, on ships, or in airports. His top priorities are to destroy Israel and to drive the USA out of the Middle East. There can be no doubt about his financial support to terrorist groups all over the world, or that he makes Libyan soil available to train these murderers.

We do not need pronouncements by the State Department spokesmen about his guilt. The USA needs an effective, consistent, and coherent counterterrorism policy.

There are four main ingredients for such a policy:

■ There must be good intelligence, which permits deterrent or retaliatory action. U.S. intelligence, still far behind what is needed, is beginning to catch up.

■ There must be carefully constructed military options tailored to specific situations. The indiscriminate use of force is not acceptable, and the surgical precision that the legitimate use of force requires still does not seem to be possible. Nevertheless, we are making significant progress here as well.

■ We must have a strategy for combating the terrorists. What are our aims and what mix of diplomacy, political action, military force, and economic sanctions is best suited to attain them? I see little evi-

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., is vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

dence the USA has any such strategy clearly in view to guide its responses.

■ Perhaps most important of all, there must be the will to act firmly, and this must be founded on a solid consensus among the president, Congress, and the people. When the USA moves against the terrorists, we do not need hesitations, sec-

“

The USA needs an effective, consistent, and coherent counterterrorism policy.

”

ond-guessing, and partisan divisions. The key to such a consensus is agreement between Congress and the president about the elements of a counterterrorism policy and a clear explanation of that agreed policy to the people. To date, this has not happened.

Terrorism is going to be a menace to U.S. interests for many years to come. It is time the administration adopted the policy of another popular Republican president by "talking softly and carrying a big stick." Six years after the president declared war on terrorism, there is no excuse for not having a strong counterterrorism policy we can all support.